

"hey lawrence
this is your brother sean
i don't know if you
heard
but they're saying
on the news that
bukowski's
dead"

— Lawrence Welsh

Los Angeles CA

THE SHIMMERING WALL

On the wall of my workroom
are pictures of writers
that I admire,
photos I've clipped over the years
& tacked up there
to give me a little help
when the blank white sheet
starts staring back at me:

Pound lounging in his Paris studio with friends,
F. Scott with Zelda on the deck of an ocean liner,
Hemingway drinking in a crowded Havana bar,
T.S. giving a reading at Sylvia Beach's bookshop,
Joyce at a tea party playing his mandolin...

Then there's the picture of Céline
alone,
an old man
alone in the dining room
of his ramshackle house at Meudon.
It's dead of winter but the fireplace is dark.
He sits at the large round table
wearing an overcoat & scarf.
The table's cluttered with his writing,
some of it in stacks, some scattered
among the pencils & pens, a bottle of ink,
two knobby apples, half a sandwich, a cup & saucer...

Céline looks up hopelessly at the camera;
he's waiting for death to knock,
death does knock.

Now Bukowski's dead,
dead as his beloved Beethoven.

Bukowski & Céline were brothers;
a couple of pirates, two lone wolves,
who loved their cats more than they did humankind.

Still their intuitive flights carried them
at least part of the way
over the shimmering wall
that stands between us
& whatever it hides.

I don't have a picture of Bukowski
on my wall,
because I've never found one
that did justice to his sublime ugliness.

But, Buk, I do have your poems on my desk
& the music's still there,
clear & rising,
just like a symphony by the Bee.

— Richard M. West

Bainbridge Island WA

THE HIGHSCHOOL GIRLS (1984)

the girls used to say to me: "you're so
negative!"
they said this in a very final way and
it seemed to satisfy
them.
(the boys didn't say anything to me because
they knew I would take it to
them.)
but the girls were very superior
saying, "you're so
negative!"
It made them feel intellectual, or,
at least, intelligent.
they had already formed ideas
of what life was
and what life should be
and how one should perform
under these
conditions.

it was all right with me, I didn't want to be
near them, I didn't want to fuck them or
marry them or
even date then,
I found none of them
beautiful.

now, over 45 years later
I find that almost everybody is
negative
and I'm positive